

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-4741

1. Name

Historic 611 - 623 South Bethel Street
and / common

2. Location

street & number 611 - 623 South Bethel Street
city, town Baltimore
state & zip code Maryland 21231 county

3. Classification

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | X occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| X building(s) | X private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational | X private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | X yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> not applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name
street & number telephone
city, town state & zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Land Records liber
street & number Clarence Mitchell Courthouse folio
city, town Baltimore State Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title
date federal state county local
depository for survey records
city, town state & zip code

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check One

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check One

☒ original site
☐ moved:
date of move: _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The east side of the 600 block of S. Bethel St. is comprised of two groups of two-bay-wide, two-story-and-attic brick houses, typical of a popular type of Baltimore rowhouse built in the late 1840s and 1850s to serve the city's growing working class population, as well as a pair of late Italianate-style houses and one very important survivor from the late 18th century—a 2 ½ story house that is only one-room deep.

611 – 613 and 615 – 617 S. Bethel St. are pairs of two-bay-wide, two-story-and-attic brick houses. The lower-pitched gable roof allowed for a more spacious upper story, which now could be lit by small rectangular windows at both the front and rear of the house, instead of the earlier dormer windows. Despite its practical nature, this new feature had its roots in a stylistic change in Baltimore's fashionable housing, the small "attic" windows being an important part of the façade design of much larger town mansions being built in the new Greek Revival style.

The houses are two-and-a-half stories in height. 611 – 613 are 12' wide and occupy lots 67' deep; 616 – 617 are 12' wide and occupy lots 100' deep. Each two-room-deep house has a one-story brick rear kitchen addition somewhat narrower than the house. Because early house lots in Baltimore were laid out back to back, without rear service alleys, the service entrance to the backyard is through the flat-linted sallyport located in the center of each pair. The houses are constructed in running bond, which was always painted. 611, however, has been covered with formstone and 613 with stucco, obscuring all original details. The low-pitched gable roof has a simple corbelled brick cornice. The roofs are covered with modern asphalt shingles overtop the original cedar shakes. A double chimney located at the peak of the gable roof serves both the front and rear rooms. Each house also has a chimney at the rear of the kitchen addition.

Door and window openings have segmentally-arched brick lintels, with plain tympanums, and wood sills. All window openings are filled with 1/1 replacement sash. Doorways had single-light transoms but all are now covered over and the houses show a variety of replacement door types. 611 – 613 sit on high basements, lit by a tall sash, the entrances being reached by four brick or concrete steps. 615 – 617 sit on low basements, the entrances being reached directly from the street.

Continuation sheet

The houses are two rooms deep, with the front room being entered directly from the front door. The front and back rooms of the first floor are separated by a wide opening, with the tightly winding, narrow stairs set in the rear room, in the space between the partition wall and the fireplace. There are two bedrooms on the second floor of the main part of the house, each with a fireplace. The third floor attic rooms have low sloping ceilings, with a maximum ceiling height of about seven feet at the peak of the gable sloping down to about four feet at the front and rear of the house. The one-story rear addition served as the kitchen, with its own cooking fireplace.

619 – 621 S. Bethel St. are a pair of three-bay-wide late Italianate-style brick houses, very unusual on an alley street, and built in the late 1880s. Each house is 16'6" wide and occupies a lot 100' deep. Because early house lots in Baltimore were laid out back to back, without rear service alleys, the service entrance to the backyard is through the flat-linteled sallyport located in the center of each pair. The houses are constructed in running bond and were always painted. The shed roof is capped by a continuous wooden cornice consisting of a deeply projecting crown molding supported by a total of seven long brackets (for the pair) that once connected to a lower molding strip and ended with a distinct trefoil pattern. The crown molding is also supported by a row of scroll-sawn modillions, set against the frieze area which is also decorated with a cut-work band on its lower edge. Door and window openings have splayed brick lintels and brick sills. All window openings are filled with 1/1 replacement sash. Doorways have single-light transoms and modern six-panel doors. The houses sit on low basements, lit by a tiny sash, the entrances being reached by three brick steps.

623 S. Bethel St. is a two-bay wide, 2 ½ story brick house with gable roof and a replacement dormer window that is one of a few surviving such houses in Fells Point, dating from the 1790s. The house is notable for its one-room-deep floor plan and steeply-pitched gable roof—a plan seen on some of the earliest Federal-period houses in the area.

The house was one of a pair and is 15' wide on a lot only 20' deep. The house has a one-story brick rear kitchen addition somewhat narrower than the house. The façade is covered with stucco so all original details are obscured but it was probably constructed in common bond and was always painted. The steeply pitched gable roofs are covered with modern asphalt shingles overtop the original cedar shakes. A simple corbelled brick cornice runs across the façade. There is a chimney at the rear of the kitchen addition. Door and window openings have flat lintels—either splayed brick or wood, beneath the stucco covering. All of the window openings are filled with 1/1 replacement sash. The original single-light doorway transom has been covered over and the house has a modern six-panel door. The house sits on a low basement, lit by a tall sash, the entrance being reached by two brick steps.

The houses are only one room deep, the front room being entered directly from the front door. The stairs are located at the rear of the main room and ascend in a tightly winding curve to the second floor. The one-story rear addition served as the kitchen. The dormer story has a single large room beneath the high rafters.

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8. Significance

| Period | Area of significance | check one & justify | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theatre | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900 | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: specify | |

Specific dates c. 1845 - 1855

Builder/Architect

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The east side of the 600 block of S. Bethel St. is extremely significant for containing a very early one-room-deep, two-and-a-half story house built in the 1790s, when Fells Point was already an important ship building center for the growing town of Baltimore. Early occupants included people involved in the maritime trades, small-scale craftsmen, and laborers who made their homes in the smaller-scale and more affordable housing located on the small "alley" streets of Fells Point. Until about 1850 Bethel Street was known as Apple Alley and its occupants were racially mixed.

The group of houses at 611 - 617 S. Bethel St. is significant as being representative of a large group of such houses built in the 1840s and 1850s to accommodate the growing labor force centered around the Baltimore waterfront. Although showing stylistic influences from Greek Revival style buildings constructed in Baltimore in the 1830s and 1840s (in the proportions of the attic windows, the chaste exterior details, and the double parlor floor plan), the outstanding feature of these houses is their extreme simplicity of design and detailing. They are practical adaptations of a current mode of building, designed to meet the need for efficient, low-cost housing for a growing working class community. The floor plan is essentially the same as that of the earlier Federal-style two-and-a-half story houses, but the opening between the two rooms is wider, reflecting popular Greek Revival tastes. The increase in height of the third story (from a dormer story to an attic story) allowed the third story to be divided into two separate rooms, in place of the one open room of the dormer story, thus providing welcome additional private living space to large families or those who had to take in boarders. The houses do not differ markedly from similar two-story-and-attic houses built on nearby main streets—they are simply somewhat narrower versions priced to serve less affluent residents of the old walking city.

Other houses are significant as representing the types of infill housing built on this alley block to replace earlier wooden structures. These Italianate-style houses are typical of those built after the Civil War to serve as inexpensive housing for the influx of newly arrived immigrant families seeking work in harbor-related activities or in the first small factories being built at this time.

The houses are especially significant as being located in the oldest part of Fells Point, only a few blocks from the water, and represent an integral part of the history of this National Register district. Slated for demolition in the 1960s as part of the planned East-West highway connection existing segments of I-95 to the north and south of the city, these houses were saved by local preservation activists who created the Fells Point National Register District in 1969.

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9. Major Bibliographic References

Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse*
(New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999)

10. Geographic Data

Acreage of nominated property

Quadrangle name

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared by

name / title Dr. Mary Ellen Hayward

Organization The Alley House Project

street & number 1306 Carrollton Ave.

city, town Baltimore

date June 2000

telephone

state & zip code Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Maryland, Article 41, section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of rights.

Return to:

DHCP/DHCD

Maryland Historical Trust

100 Community Place

Crownsville MD 21032-2023

Balto. Md.

IGH

VK

EDN

TON

ANNA

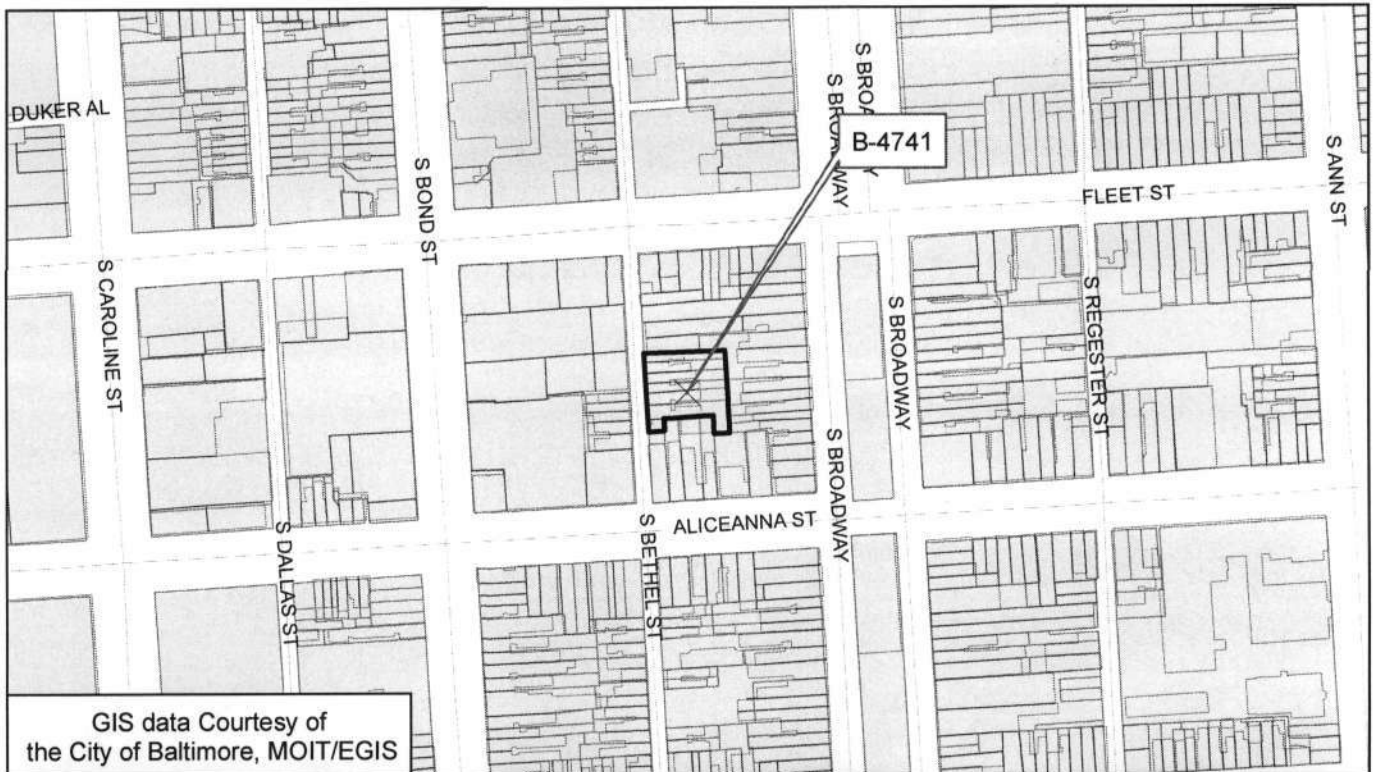
30

BROADWAY

FELLS F

CONTINGENT MARINE

B-4741
611-623 S. Bethel Street
Block 1810 Lots 067-077
Baltimore City
Baltimore East Quad.





611-613 S. Bethel

B- 4741

611-623 S. Bethel St.

BALTO. MD.

C. Beltmore

11/47

MD 5470

1/4

1154100 0000 0000 0000



615-617 S. Bethel

B-4741

611-623 S. Bethel St.

BALTO, MD

C. Beldare

11/97

2/4

155400 001 10 4 10 20



619-621 S. Federal

B-4741

611-623 S. Bethel St.

BALTO. MD

C. Belfrage

11/97

3/4

180

L143400 0211 801 11 12



623 S. Bethel

B- 4741

611-623 S. Bethel St.

Bethel, MD

C. Belfrage

11/97

4/4

1081400 021 1 2 4 16 10